

**Question: How can the average person apply Chinese Medicine to their everyday life?**

**Answer:** Let's start with what you eat. We say you should exercise moderation in all things. But once in a while, it's ok to splurge! Try not to approach your eating habits *too* strictly, or you'll be less likely to stick to your plan. Remember also, that watching your diet is for everyone, not just for those who may be overweight. First of all, the body benefits from eating on a regular basis. Each meal time should occur at about the same time every day. When you eat, eating should be all that you are doing. Don't watch television, read a book, or work. Focus on eating. Chew your food thoroughly. Chewing food and mixing it with saliva begins the digestive process. Not chewing food thoroughly is actually like skipping a step in your digestion! Simply changing chewing habits has helped some people treat chronically loose stools and diarrhea. It also helps treat constipation. Eat five or six small meals a day. Don't skip meals.

You don't have to be a vegetarian, and we don't advocate being a vegetarian. That sort of diet works well for some people, but not for others. But if you eat meat, eat meat in moderation. Limit your intake of red meat. Include a lot of fish, vegetables, and fruits. In the warm months, eat cool foods – raw fruit and vegetables, less meat, fewer hot spices. In the cooler months, eat more warm food – lightly steamed vegetables, a bit more meat, more hot spices. In other words, live in harmony with the seasons and your environment. This will benefit your Spleen Qi, helping you to digest, build blood, and have more energy.

Get some exercise, but don't overdo it (there's that moderation thing again!). Twenty to thirty minutes of exercise per day will reduce your stress levels, benefiting your Liver Qi, reducing depression and irritability, benefiting the cardiovascular system, and helping many digestive problems; and it will also build up your Spleen Qi. Check with your physician before starting any exercise program.

Place a warm towel or heating pad or hot water bottle across your shins just below the knees every day. This stimulates an acupuncture point on your leg called Zu san li, or Stomach 36 (don't stimulate this point if you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant). It is perhaps the most important acupuncture point on your body. It builds blood, improves digestion, benefits Spleen Qi, and builds Wei qi (the Chinese concept of defensive energy, or immune response). Many Chinese Physicians believe this point to be vital in promoting longevity and anti-aging.

Sleep well. The best hours to sleep are probably from about 10PM through 6AM. Sleeping well builds your blood. Not sleeping, sleeping too little, and not sleeping well consume the blood. Interestingly, "Blood Deficiency" will frequently cause insomnia, creating a negative reinforcing cycle. Sleep also helps build up your Spleen Qi.

Why is your Spleen Qi important? It gives you your day to day energy, controls digestion, stops excessive bruising and bleeding, helps your immune response, and keeps you from using up your Kidney Qi.

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